

BUDGET FOR BLACK LIVES

A proposal to divest from incarceration and invest in communities

SOUL, The People's Lobby, Chicago Community Bond Fund, National Nurses United, and the Shriver Center on Poverty Law are calling on the Cook County Board of Commissioners and President Toni Preckwinkle to invest more money in public services that promote community health and safety equitably across the County, and especially in the Black communities most impacted by violence and incarceration. The Budget for Black Lives campaign simultaneously calls on the County Board to divest money from the failed and racist systems of policing and incarceration that have caused immense harm and failed to keep our communities safe.

We propose cutting the Cook County Sheriff's budget (which includes funding for the Cook County Jail) by \$157 million and redirecting this money to public services in Black and Brown communities to public services not administered by law enforcement. This would:

- Decrease the Cook County Jail budget to account for the 50% reduction in the number of people locked up over the past 7 years;
- Move money out of policing systems that harm Black communities and do not keep Cook County residents safe;
- Provide significant increases in funding for critical public services in Black and Brown communities that will expand community health, safety, and sustainability; and
- Offset proposed cuts to the Public Defender's Office and the Cook County Health system that are unacceptable, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Physical & Mental Health and 9-1-1 Diversion

\$1 million enables the County to begin creating a mental health emergency first responder program so that trained mental health workers, rather than police, can respond to people in mental health emergencies.

\$8.5 million adds mental health care program staff at all Cook County Health community clinics, especially those in Black communities, so that people have the option of mental health care in neighborhoods that currently lack sufficient access.

\$6.2 million increases staffing more broadly at Cook County Health community clinics and reverses some of the disinvestment from those clinics that has happened over the past few years.

\$39.7 million offsets the \$55 million in proposed cuts to the Cook County Health system budget, which are unacceptable given that Black people in Cook County disproportionately rely on Cook County Health and are especially vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Restorative Justice & Violence Prevention

\$5.5 million expands funding provided by the Cook County Justice Advisory Council to nonprofit community organizations that are engaging in anti-violence work, providing services to formerly incarcerated people to reduce recidivism, and creating restorative justice programs that create real community accountability for people who have done harm to others.

\$5 million creates a new Office for Community Health, Safety, and Restorative Justice within the Department of Public Health so the County can learn from the restorative and transformative justice practices being developed by community-based organizations and scale up those practices in a democratically accountable way using the county resources and public workers.

Housing

\$10 million expands reentry housing options for people returning from jail and prison.

\$3 million enlarges Cook County Health's investment in housing for medically vulnerable people.

\$47 million increases rental assistance subsidies already provided by the Housing Authority of Cook County to reach an additional 2,500 families, with fewer restrictions than the vouchers funded by federal money and more flexibility to focus on Black communities with housing needs.

This total of \$60 million in housing spending would bring the County's expenditures on housing to just 1% of the County's budget.

Cook County Public Defender's Office

\$7 million prevents the Cook County Public Defender's Office from being subject to any cuts to its already underfunded budget as the County seeks to address the revenue shortfall caused by COVID-19.

\$250,000 allows the Cook County Public Defender's Office to improve compliance with *Padilla* mandated by the US Supreme Court and expand their legal representation and services for non-citizens.

Jobs

\$5 million creates a pipeline for training and placing people from communities impacted by incarceration in non-law enforcement public sector jobs.

Broadband Internet Access

\$5 million provides broadband internet access for Black and Brown communities who do not currently have adequate access, which is especially important to enable remote work and remote learning.

Move services and programs for incarcerated people to Cook County Health and community-based organizations

\$3 million moves mental health services that are currently funded through the Sheriff's Office budget into the budget of the Cook County Health system so that services are not redundant to those provided by Cermak Health and people's access to services is not dependent on being incarcerated.

\$10.7 million moves other "inmate services" from the Sheriff's Office to community-based organizations.

